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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/15/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: GOI OFFICIALS CONDEMN KIDNAPPINGS; MANY STATEMENTS

REFLECT SECTARIAN DIVISIONS

Classified By: Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) Summary: In the wake of the November 14 kidnapping of dozens of people from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, GOI officials and Council of Representatives (CoR) members have issued strong statements condemning the incident. Many statements reflect sectarian divisions and various conspiracy theories. Addressing CoR members approximately two hours after the incident, Dr. Abid al-Ajayli, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research (Sunni - Tawafuq) threatened to suspend all university education<sup>8</sup> because he fears further attacks on Iraq's educational institutions and personnel. End Summary.

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Shi'a Blame "Occupation Forces" or Baathists  
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12. (C) Following the Minister's statement, Sadrist CoR bloc leader Falah Hassen Shenshel stated that the "occupation forces" are responsible, not the GOI, because the "occupation forces" have not given Iraq complete control over the security forces. PM advisor Ahmed Saadawi (Da'wa) claimed to Pol Counselor that the Baathists were behind the attack and that it was an attempt to bring down the government. Samira al-Musawi (Shi'a Coalition/Independent) accused Ministry of Higher Education's security personnel of being involved. Muhammad al-Shawaili (Fadhila) told PolOff that this event, and the general level of violence, point to the need for a dictatorship in Iraq (one that does not kill its own people, he added) in the style of the Gulf states; he stated that Arab culture is incompatible with democracy.

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Sunnis Feel Targeted by Shi'a Militias  
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13. (C) Salim Abdullah al-Jeboori (Tawafuq/IIP) questioned how the kidnappers were able to get the large number of police uniforms needed for this operation, suggesting that personnel from the Shi'a-dominated MOI were responsible. In a late evening phone call with PolOff, the Minister of Higher Education characterized the kidnapping as motivated by Shiite hatred aimed at the Sunni employees of the ministry. He claimed that some kidnap victims were released after their IDs were checked and only Sunnis were still being held. Those who Minister al-Ajayli spoke to believed that the kidnapping victims are being held in heavily-Shiite Sadr City. As of late evening November 14 the Minister had not received ransom requests.

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Kurds Concerned About Overall Security  
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14. (C) Mahmud Othman, a CoR member from the Kurdish Alliance,

noted the tendency of these types of attacks to undermine Iraqi morale and the political process. He noted that thousands of Iraqis have left the country because of the worsening security situation. After the meeting, Sami al-Atroshi (Kurdistan Islamic Union) told PolOff that if the GOI is unable to secure government buildings, then MNF-I needs to do so.

15. (C) Comment: The differing narratives, made without full knowledge of the facts of the kidnappings, reflect Iraq's sectarian divide, Sunni/Shia mistrust, and the tendency of both sides to automatically blame the other. End Comment.  
Speckhard